DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 248 CE 072 055

TITLE	American Business and Older Workers: A Road Map to the 21st Century.
INSTITUTION	American Association of Retired Persons, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Mar 95
NOTE	17p.; Study conducted by DYG, Inc.
AVAILABLE FROM	American Association of Retired Persons, Fulfillment, 601 E Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20049 (order no. D13827).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Age Discrimination; Dislocated Workers; *Employer Attitudes; *Employment Problems; *Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Job Layoff; *Middle Aged Adults; Older Adults; *Social Bias; Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*Older Workers

ABSTRACT

A survey of a random sample of 400 companies (100 in each of 4 size groupings) was taken in December 1994 to determine business attitudes toward older workers (defined as 50 or older) and to provide insight into how older workers can best position themselves in order to get and keep the jobs they need. In each company the person interviewed was the executive with senior responsibility for making human resources decisions. Some of the findings were as follows: (1) productivity is up, driven by technology and fear; (2) health care costs have been contained, often by dropping coverage of retirees and dependents; (3) computer skills are now essential for managers; (4) the culture of "doing more with less" is spawning morale problems such as stress, resentment, and violence; (5) the loss of older workers as a result of downsizing is seen as a problem, but there is much less attention paid to recruiting, hiring, retaining, or training older workers or preparing older workers for retirement; (6) older workers as new employees are seen as a bit of a bargain, willing to accept lower wages and fewer benefits than they were getting before; (7) an obstacle to hiring or retaining older workers is the perception that older workers lack flexibility and are resistant to technology; (8) human resources decision makers have problems hiring older workers because they sense younger managers do not really want older workers, they feel embarrassed by the desperation of older applicants, and they assume an older worker will take the job offered for less pay but keep looking and leave soon; and (9) human resources decision makers believe strongly that the day of the older worker is yet to come based on the mounting need for quality and skill, which are older workers' best attributes. The "Conclusions" page cites a list of thirteen do's and don'ts for the older worker in finding and keeping a job. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 397 248

AARP

• PROFITS

• COST-CUTTING

• NEW JOBS

American Business and Older Workers:

• EXPENDABILITY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

• BOTTOM LINE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Glenn-Merkel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A Road Map to the 21st Century

CE072055

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
STUDY HIGHLIGHTS	3
KEY FINDINGS	4
Human Resources Trends And Themes	4
Perceptions Of Older Workers	8
CONCLUSIONS	12
Older Worker Do's And Don'ts For Finding And Holding A Job	12
What AARP Can Do To Help	Inside Back Cover

INTRODUCTION

In 1985, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) initiated a research effort designed to identify, document, and track perceptions, policies, and practices of American business vis-à-vis older workers. This report presents the results of the third study in this ongoing series.

Looking back, AARP is to be congratulated for sensing, early on, that economic, social, and demographic trends were coming together to create structural changes in the workplace that would have a profound effect on workers of all ages. At the time the first of these studies was conducted, the status of older workers in American business was governed by certain widespread and long adhered to assumptions: the privileges of seniority, the desire among employees to retire as soon as possible, an unlimited pool of young and willing labor, the scenario of long service with a single company, and a compensation system based on full-time employment with uninterrupted salary and benefits provided.

Over the past decade, events and trends have, indeed, blown away these assumptions and altered the relationship between all workers and American business, but especially the older worker-business relationship. Five profound developments in business have revolutionized the world of work:

1. *American business has been faced with unrelenting downward pressure on profits for a prolonged period of time.* Mounting global competition, a slow growth/recession economy here at home, consumers demanding greater and greater value for their money, and rapidly rising health care costs have all conspired to erode profits, while a hungry Wall Street demands improved short-term performance.

2. *Success strategies to cope with declining profitability have been and continue to be built on cost cutting.* To bolster profits, then, business has turned to cost cutting with large-scale reductions in work forces, or downsizing, the primary tool. But business also has looked to trim employee benefits, especially health care, and redesign compensation, effectively reducing total wages for many employees. Downsizing has been achieved through thinning out the ranks of middle management, automation, and incentives for early retirement, in each case, displacing large numbers of older workers.

3. *Even in the face of downsizing, business has created new jobs but there is a growing division in the workplace between "service" and "knowledge" jobs.* The vast majority of new jobs have been either relatively low wage positions in the service sector or positions requiring advanced education and/or training. Displaced workers, often older, seeking reemployment are forced into lower wage jobs in the absence of training for the knowledge jobs.

4. *The mood of business, indeed of all Americans, has come to stress bottom-line thinking and pragmatic attitudes.* In light of the triumph of capitalism over communism and the ascendancy of Wall Street, bottom-line performance has become the only goal. The more traditional business agenda that emphasized job creation and community service along with return on investment has all but disappeared. Moreover, Americans have moved away from ideological approaches (what is right) and toward case-by-case pragmatism (what works). Workplace upheavals in the forms of more downsizing or reengineering or restructuring compensation are likely to continue.

5. *Traditional corporate paternalism has given way to a corporate culture of expendability.* Concepts of job security, seniority, income growth, and the protections offered by benefits no longer apply.

In addition, looking to the year 2000:

- The population and the work force will age as baby boomers move into their 50s.
- There will be fewer new entrants into the work force since the current cohort of 18-29 year olds is small relative to baby boomers.
- Retirement as we know it today is likely to become a more elusive goal as Social Security is reexamined in light of federal budget deficit reduction goals, corporate pensions are trimmed, and personal savings are depleted or nonexistent.

It is clear that business will need highly skilled and motivated workers. It is also clear that there will be a great many older workers and that they will need jobs. How business feels about older workers is less clear. The purpose of this study is to shed light on business attitudes toward older workers and to provide insight into how older workers can best position themselves in order to get and keep the jobs they need. The research also explores the roles AARP might play in helping facilitate employment for older workers in the 21st Century.

The research was conducted in December 1994 and consisted of a survey among a random sample of 400 companies - 100 in each of four size groupings - representing the universe of all companies with 50 or more employees. The methods used in sample selection were designed to ensure that the final sample would reflect this universe of companies in terms of industry type and region. Sample balancing weights were applied to adjust for the disproportionate company size allocations so that the analysis of the total population would properly reflect their real-world proportions.

In each company, the person interviewed was the executive with senior responsibility for making Human Resources decisions. In larger companies this was often the Vice President of Human Resources or Personnel; in smaller companies, the CEO. The 30-minute interview was conducted via telephone.

For the purpose of the survey, "older workers" were defined as employees 50 years of age or older.

To supplement the survey, four focus groups were conducted with Human Resources Decision Makers - two groups in Atlanta, Georgia, and two in Westchester, New York.

This report includes the following sections:

- Study Highlights - A summary of the study's major findings and key conclusions.
- Key Findings

  ...Human Resources Trends and Themes - A series of trends and themes that define the emerging business agenda with regard to the work force.

  ...Perceptions of Older Workers - A discussion of how the older worker measures up on the new agenda.
- Conclusions - A set of "Do's and Don'ts" for the older worker and implications for AARP programming opportunities.

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

In brief, the key study findings are:

- Senior managers are demanding greater and greater productivity reflecting an ethic of "do more with less."

  ...Productivity is reported to be up, driven by technology and fear.

- The actual size of the employee population is declining in larger companies (500 employees or more); one in three report declines.
- Cost cutting remains a top priority, but, health care costs specifically are of somewhat less concern.

  ...One in 2 companies have changed their health care plans in the past two years; 6 in 10 large companies.

  ...Fewer dependents and retirees are covered by company health care plans today than in 1989.

  ...Medium-sized companies (100-999 employees) are slashing retiree coverage.

Senior managers are demanding nontraditional approaches to employee management including hiring generalists over specialists.

- Contingent work arrangements are widespread: 1 in 2 companies are using temporary or part-time workers regularly; 4 in 10 view older workers as prime contingent candidates.
- Managers are becoming more demanding about who they hire and retain; work force quality is the top priority.
- Skills, flexibility, "attitude," and emotional stability are the most important criteria for judging employees.

  ...Computer skills are now essential (price of admission) for managers.

- Culture of "doing more with less" is spawning morale problems: stress, resentment, violence.
- The loss of older workers as a result of downsizing is seen as a problem.

  ...Work ethic and experience are mourned.

- Despite empathy with the "pain" of displaced older workers, there is much less attention paid to recruiting, hiring, retaining, or training older workers or preparing older workers for retirement.

Older workers are viewed as better than workers of any other age on: skill, experience, work ethic.

...Older workers as new hires are even seen as a bit of a bargain - willing to accept lower wages/fewer benefits than they were getting before; real value - the best for less.

- However, two overpowering obstacles to hiring/retaining older workers noted in 1989 persist and are even more of a problem today:

  ...Lack of flexibility - perceived unwillingness to do more and new tasks and unwillingness to adapt to the new work environment: older workers = "old ways."

  ...Resistance to technology - again, a perceived adaptation problem.

It is assumed that older workers cannot use a computer.

- In addition, Human Resources Decision Makers have problems hiring older workers.

  ...They sense younger managers do not really want older workers.

  ...They feel embarrassed by the desperation/plight of older applicants.

  ...They are often put off by "know it all" attitude.

  ...They assume an older worker will take the job offered for less pay but keep looking and leave soon.

  ...They assume no computer skills.

- Despite the obstacles, Human Resources Decision Makers strongly believe the tide is turning for older workers and that they are about to be welcomed back into the workplace with open arms.

KEY FINDINGS

Human Resources Trends and Themes

The results of the survey and the focus group discussions reveal eight major business trends and themes relevant to our consideration of the prospects for older workers in the workplace.

1. *An Ethic of "Do More With Less."* Human Resources Decision Makers report that the primary edict from senior management is to find ways to increase people productivity. Indeed, the belief that "smaller, less, fewer" is not just an inescapable by-product of cutting costs but that smaller is actually better is taking hold in small-, medium-, and large-size companies. Downsizing has evolved into "right sizing" and senior management is turning a blemish (layoffs) into a virtue. The perceived benefits of "doing more with less" include: a more nimble organization able to change on a dime; greater creativity and innovation; the ability to get closer to the customer in all aspects of the business.

And Human Resources Decision Makers further report that productivity is up, driven by either technology or fear - the fear of losing one's job if you do not produce. Human Resources Decision Makers indicate that employees are working significantly long hours.

2. In fact, the *employee population is declining in larger companies.* Overall, there has been little change since 1989 in the direction of the size of company work forces with about 1 in 2 Human Resources Decision Makers reporting a stable employee population.

However, nearly three times as many Human Resources Decision Makers in larger companies (500-999 and 1,000 plus employees) report declines today compared with 1989.

It is no surprise that Human Resources Decision Makers are less likely now than in 1989 (17% compared with 25%) to cite recruiting as a pressing Human Resources issue.

Employee Population	All Companies		50-99 Employees		100-499 Employees		500-999 Employees		1,000 Plus Employees	
	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %
Growing	36	39	37	38	36	41	29	33	23	46
Stable	54	48	54	49	55	46	44	53	46	43
Declining	10	12	9	12	9	13	27	11	29	11

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3. *Cost Cutting Remains a Top Priority.* "Doing more with less" may be the rallying cry, but lowered costs is still the bedrock objective. Human Resources Decision Makers describe continuous pressure to further reduce employee costs. Thus, downsizing remains a strategy. Many Human Resources Decision Makers report that their companies have been through three or four rounds of layoffs and that more are expected. Several Human Resources Decision Makers in the focus groups referred to downsizing as "a way of life" and criticized their management for using downsizing as an easy way to improve the bottom line quickly.

Many Human Resources Decision Makers are quite cynical about cost cutting in general and downsizing in particular. They feel they were burned by their downsizing experiences to date: the "wrong" people left when incentive packages were offered, and skills were lost; in the aftermath, the people who remain are badly shaken and morale problems have emerged. However, Human Resources Decision Makers in all size companies fully expect the phenomenon to continue unabated

4. *Fewer Dependents and Retirees Are Covered by Company Health Care Plans Today Than in 1989.* Human Resources Decision Makers report "progress" on containing health care costs, and there is some evidence that the cost of health care benefits is less of a concern especially in larger companies.

Overall, 1 in 2 Human Resources Decision Makers report that their companies have made changes in health care coverage over the past two years; 6 in 10 in companies with 1,000 plus employees.

- About 1 in 4 have switched to managed care (PPO or HMO).
- And 1 in 4 are asking employees to contribute more to paying their premium/co-pay.

Medium-sized companies, especially, are cutting back on retiree coverage; small companies are cutting back on dependent coverage.

Cutting Health Care Costs as a Pressing Issue

	1994 %	1989 %
All companies	20	24
50-99 employees	16	22
100-499 employees	26	25
500-999 employees	22	31
1,000 plus employees	23	20

Cost of Health Insurance as Issue Receiving a Great Deal of Attention

	1994 %	1989 %	1985 %
All companies	64	71	65
50-99 employees	63	67	56
100-499 employees	66	74	64
500-999 employees	63	67	88
1,000 plus employees	71	80	88

5. *Embracing the Nontraditional.* Human Resources Decision Makers report an "out with the old, in with the new" mentality about the strategies and approaches to management being put into practice. Gone are: paternalism, hierarchical position and salary structures, automatic salary increases, narrowly defined areas of responsibility, and skill specialization. Senior management is moving to:

- Performance-based compensation - Human Resources Decision Makers in the largest companies report that tying a part of compensation to performance goals (through a base plus bonus structure, for example) has been in place for managers for some time, but Decision Makers in

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Plans Include	All Companies		50-99 Employees		100-499 Employees		500-999 Employees		1,000 Plus Employees	
	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Dependents	86	91	80	88	95	90	96	94	95	98
Retirees	49	59	46	45	50	61	64	78	79	83

small- and medium-size companies are just now implementing this tool to improve productivity.

Broadband salary ranges - flattening the organization and reducing the number of levels for title and salary is most common in the largest companies; smaller companies tend not to be as hierarchical to begin with.

• Valuing generalists rather than specialists - in all size companies, Human Resources Decision Makers report the growing expectation that employees will have both the ability and willingness to do multiple functions. This, of course, underlies the growing team phenomenon (especially in large companies) and is believed to enable the "more with less" et. . to flourish.

6. *More and More "Contingent" Work Arrangements.* In addition to reinventing compensation and title for full-time employees, American business is increasing its use of part-time, contract, and temporary workers. Human Resources Decision Makers are especially happy with these nontraditional approaches:

• Contingent workers cost less - no benefits, "you only use them when you need to."

• Often two part-time workers add up to better quality and skills - "sometimes it's the only way to get a really good person who doesn't want full-time"; contingent workers score points for Human Resources Decision Makers - "they make you look good when they're good and cheap."

About 1 in 2 Human Resources Decision Makers report using contingent/part-time labor; 6 in 10 in the largest companies. College students and older workers (50-64 years of age) are thought to be the most desirable contingent or part-time workers.

Older Workers Desirable as Contingent/Part-Time

Among Those Using Contingent/Part-Time

	1994 %
All companies	40
50-99 employees	36
100-499 employees	48
500-999 employees	38
1,000 plus employees	43

7. *Higher Standards for Judging Employees.* Human Resources Decision Makers report that managers are becoming more demanding about who they hire and who they keep. In fact, our survey data show a significant increase in requirements for new employees. The twin beliefs driving this new choosiness are that:

• To prosper into the next century you must have only the top quality employees.

• There are many very qualified workers "out there" to pick from; the best is available, it is a buyer's market.

Of the 19 employee characteristics tracked in our survey, fully 12 increased in importance.

8. *Managers Now Want "Skills Plus."*
Commitment to quality work remains the most important attribute that managers look for but work ethic, flexibility, and emotional stability are much more important in 1995. Human Resources Decision Makers call it "attitude" and workers without the right attitude or, worse, with a bad attitude are no longer to be tolerated

Work ethic means good attendance, coming in on time, getting along with co-workers.

Flexibility speaks to the "do more with less" ethic, the willingness to do different tasks, pitch in and help, change roles, change the way you do things; in other words nonstop openness to adaptation.

Emotional stability - with stress and tensions more and more the norm in work environments (as discussed below), workers "who can take it" (constant change, long hours, doing the work of two, constant job insecurity, etc.) are in greater demand.

In addition to skills plus attitude, two critical attributes emerge:

- Computer skills for management employees.
- Customer focus for everyone: Human Resources Decision Makers in all size companies report that a new requirement of employees no matter what position they are in and even if they never are near a customer is "to always think customer."

Taken together, a picture of the ideal employee for the 21st Century begins to emerge:

- Comes to the job already trained with a high skill level or experience.
- Has a strong work ethic.
- Is infinitely flexible, willing to change roles and positions, learn new things, take on more tasks and responsibilities (do more with less).
- Is customer focused.
- Knows and supports the company's goals.
- Willing to accept less/no growth in income and benefits.

How are today's employees adapting to the tougher, more demanding business climate described above? Human Resources Decision Makers report that employees are definitely not doing well.

Morale is poor.

Stress is high and rising.

Workplace violence is on the rise - employee fights, vandalism.

More and more rabble-rousers.

Human Resources Decision Makers identify employee concern about wage stagnation as the greatest contributor to morale problems.

Widespread Evident Concern
About Wage Stagnation

	1994 %
All companies	66
50-99 employees	66
100-499 employees	66
500-999 employees	69
1,000 plus employees	73

Displays of disloyalty and questioning senior management's judgment are growing more and more frequent. And Human Resources Decision Makers are not immune, they are experiencing their own morale problems with about 1 in 3 reporting personal effects from the new business climate.

Perceptions of Older Workers

How do older workers fare against this backdrop of new demands and expectations? Insights into Human Resources Decision Makers' views on the older worker provide a telling picture.

1. *The departure of older workers as a result of downsizing is seen as a real loss.* Overall, 1 in 2 Human Resources Decision Makers report problems as a result of losing older workers.

Those Reporting There Are Problems From Loss of Older Workers

	1994 %
All companies	52
50-99 employees	49
100-499 employees	56
500-999 employees	57
1,000 plus employees	47

The key problems?

- Less work ethic.
- Fewer seasoned, experienced people.

2. *The plight of older workers is viewed with empathy, even pity.* In the focus group discussions, Human Resources Decision Makers were quick to volunteer that older workers have been "devastated" by downsizing and the new rules at work. Even those not "displaced" (laid off) are thought to be having a hard time with the new culture of expendability and flexibility.

- Fear of job loss in the next wave of downsizing.
- Resentment of what is seen by older workers as company disloyalty to them and their contributions.
- Worry about lack of income growth or having to accept lower pay and fewer benefits at a stage in life that often brings with it college tuition and the onset of health problems.

However, the empathy goes just so far; as discussed below, older workers are sometimes their own worst enemy.

3. *Overall, perceptions of older workers continue to be highly positive; in fact, older workers beat out workers of all other ages on skills, experience, work ethic.* Human Resources Decision Makers are easily able to articulate a long list of older worker strengths, as has been the case in all three of our studies.

	All Companies		50-99 Employees		1,000 Plus Employees	
	1994 %	1985 %	1994 %	1985 %	1994 %	1985 %
Solid/reliable performance record	81	71	82	74	79	68
Solid experience	73	74	74	71	83	86
Basic skills in reading, etc.	69	66a	74	65a	62	67a

a/ For 1989; item not asked in 1985.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

	All Companies %	50-99 Employees %	100-499 Employees %	500-999 Employees %	1000 Plus Employees %
Good attendance, punctuality	87	89	84	81	78
Commitment to quality	82	81	84	81	79
Someone to count on in a "crisis"	84	84	83	84	76

Perceptions of experience are actually up, especially in small and very large companies.

• Perceptions of older workers on the dimensions of the work ethic - punctuality, good attendance, reliability - are all very strong.

The focus groups reveal that Human Resources Decision Makers are having trouble with younger workers, 18-29. While viewed as "cheap," they are believed to cause trouble and not produce, have a "bad attitude," and lack skills, even in the basics of workplace etiquette. Baby boomers, 30-50, are seen as skilled, creative, and flexible but often lacking in experience and having some baggage - because they are in their family formation years, a lot of time is lost to child crises, household repairs, and family errands; this is not a good behavior pattern in the age of unrelenting productivity demands.

4. *Now, older workers as new hires are even seen as a bit of a bargain.* While the cost of older workers on the job for a long time is still an issue, hiring older workers is seen as smart money. They have skills and experience and a good work ethic and can be gotten for a lower salary than they were making before - older workers are viewed as real value *if* they are willing to accept lower compensation. Best of all is an older worker as contingent - no benefits.

5. *Two overpowering obstacles to hiring/retaining older workers noted in 1989 persist and are seen as even more of a problem today.*

• Lack of flexibility - on this all-important employee characteristic, seen as the key to "doing more with less," older workers have a poor and declining image.

Weaknesses of Older Workers

	Lack of Flexibility 1994 %	1989 %
All Companies	19	13
50-99 employees	22	11
100-499 employees	15	13
500-999 employees	13	11
1,000 plus employees	10	11

The need for flexibility and comfort with new technology has increased and the image of older workers has remained constant or decreased, resulting in a widening gap between what Human Resources Decision Makers want and what older workers are perceived as able to deliver.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Comparisons Between Importance of Employee Characteristics and Rating of Older Workers

Competition Issues	Rated Essential/ Very Important			Older Workers Rated Excellent/ Very Good			Importance/ Performance Gap		
	1994 %	1989 %	1985 %	1994 %	1989 %	1985 %	1994 %	1989 %	1985 %
Willingness to be flexible about doing different tasks	81	72	61	45	46	28	+36	+26	+33
Comfortable with new technologies	55	48	32	23	22	10	+32	+26	+22

6. *In addition, Human Resources Decision Makers have problems when it comes to hiring older workers.*

• Human Resources Decision Makers believe that younger managers do not really want older employees no matter how good their skills, so "what's the point of sending them (an older worker) to an interview." Younger managers are believed to see older workers as:

...."My mom or dad" and do no want to boss mom or dad.

...Knowing more than boomers do and making them look bad, less competent.

...Hard to relate to, not part of "my generation," "my culture."

...Inflexible, unwilling to change.

• Human Resources Decision Makers admit feeling embarrassed by the older worker in a job interview situation. Often Human Resources Decision Makers are made to feel uncomfortable by the overt desperation of the older applicant - "I'll do anything; please give me a job."

Some older workers take a very assertive tack in selling themselves, emphasizing long, long years of experience and "knowing it all." The problem becomes overkill; they communicate - "I know how to do it better than anyone here," "I'll change everything to make it better, my way" instead of communicating, "I'll fit in, I'll adapt, I'll learn your ways."

Human Resources Decision Makers say they have been burned by the really desirable older workers who take a job for lower pay but keep looking for a better position and usually find it.

As noted above, unless told to the contrary, Human Resources Decision Makers assume older workers cannot use a computer.

7. *Finally, while Human Resources Decision Makers report less company attention to trying to deal with the obstacles and problems facing older workers, they, nevertheless, believe strongly that the day of the older worker is yet to come based on the mounting need for quality and skill, which are the older worker's unique attributes.*

In our survey, we tracked activities within the company designed to help the older worker. All Human Resources Decision Makers report fewer of these activities, especially in larger companies.

However, in the focus groups, older workers were repeatedly singled out as the "work force of the future" based on their unique ability to bring back skill, experience, and the work ethic.

Implementation of Approaches to Utilizing Older Workers

	All Companies		50-99 Employees		100-499 Employees		500-999 Employees		1,000 Plus Employees	
	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %	1994 %	1989 %
Skill training for older employees	24	30	21	27	29	29	34	36	22	35
Education of managers about ways to utilize older workers	20	29	18	24	24	29	19	42	12	26

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this latest study on business and older workers are sobering. Clearly, for employees of all ages, it is tougher times with no end in sight for the multiple pressures of (1) demands for more productivity and flexibility, (2) constant threat of job loss or cuts in benefits, (3) reality of no income growth, and (4) a generally more chaotic, fluid work environment. The key to survival appears to be adaptability, and it is perceptions about this very characteristic that stand in the way of workplace success for the older worker.

Since 1989, views about older workers have grown more complex, with many perceived strengths in evidence but also some new and some persistent perceptual barriers evident. The barriers really stem from a fundamental view that older workers, while "the best" on traditional measures (skill, experience, work ethic) are not willing to adapt to the new, nontraditional business needs.

Reversing this perception - inability to adapt - is key to success into the next century. Here are some "do's and don'ts" to communicating adaptability and some ideas for AARP.

Older Worker Do's and Don'ts for Finding and Holding a Job

Human Resources Decision Makers suggest:

1. Cut back the résumé, "don't go back to 1930" - managers know you are experienced, skilled; don't overwhelm them with history, it makes you into mom or dad.
2. Go out of your way to let them know you are computer literate - with subtlety but do it; they assume you are not. Become literate if you are not; do not try to fake it.
3. Demonstrate flexibility - be willing to move with the organization and let managers know it; don't be so rigid that when your job is eliminated so are you.
4. Retrain - on your own.
5. "Cross train" - learn other roles, tasks in the company. Be ready to switch-hit and let people know.
6. Sell your strengths based on learning about the company and how you will fit in, not how you will change it.
7. In an interview, don't ask about benefits even before you hear what the job is about; focus on the job.
8. Get coaching on interviewing skills. Don't talk about your children, talk about your skills.
9. Before an interview, learn about the company, do your homework.
10. Be a little humble.
11. If moving to a new industry, be willing to think of yourself as an entry-level person.
12. Don't complain about mistreatment in the past; don't portray yourself as a victim.
13. Approach the interview as someone eager to work. Don't emphasize that you do not really need to work.

What AARP Can Do to Help

The study suggests a number of new roles for AARP:

1. Focus on 50-64 year olds in the workplace.

2. Develop formal and informal (volunteers, networking) programs to provide training on:
   ...Current business climate and what is expected of employees.
   ...How to interview - develop a manual aimed at the experienced older worker, "How to Sell Yourself."
   ...How to adapt, be flexible, and how to let others know you are.
   ...Computer skills and how to demonstrate them.
   ...How to work for younger people.
   ...Being part of a team, interpersonal skills when working with the younger generations.

3. Work with business by:
   ...Championing the older worker.
   ...Providing prescreening and referrals to harassed Human Resources Decision Makers.

American Association of Retired Persons
601 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20049

AMERICAN BUSINESS AND OLDER WORKERS: A ROAD MAP TO THE 21ST CENTURY

Prepared for
The American Association of Retired Persons
March 1989
by
[illegible]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE